

United States of America

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UNCLAS

STATE 178883 TOSEC 080132

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, PN

SUBJECT: NEW YORK TIMES ARTICLE ON PANAMA CANAL, 7/28/75

FOR THE SECRETARY FROM ROGERS

FOLLOWING IS FULL TEXT OF SUBJECT ARTICLE:

1. BEGIN QUOTE: PANAMA, JULY 24--THE HEAD OF THE PANAMANIAN GOVERNMENT SAID TODAY THAT HE BELIEVED THAT THE FORD ADMINISTRATION WAS STALLING NEGOTIATIONS FOR A NEW PANAMA CANAL TREATY BECAUSE OF POLITICAL PRESSURES IN THE UNITED STATES.

QUOTE: THE LEADER, GEN. OMAR TORRIJOS HERRERA, SAID HE WAS PROFOUNDLY DISTURBED ABOUT THE POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES FOR HIMSELF AND HIS COUNTRY.

QUOTE: 'IT SEEMS TO ME PROGRESS HAS ALMOST BEEN PARALYZED' HE SAID OF THE NEGOTIATIONS, WHICH BEGAN IN JUNE, 1974. 'IT SEEMS TO ME THAT OUR PROBLEM HAS BEEN REPLACED BY YOUR POLITICS. THE DELAY HAS LASTED FOUR MONTHS NOW.'

2. VIOLENCE FEARED. IN A TWO HOUR INTERVIEW HERE, GENERAL TORRIJOS REPEATEDLY EXPRESSED APPREHENSION THAT FURTHER DELAY WOULD CAUSE HOSTILITY IN PANAMA THAT COULD NOT BE CONTAINED AND MIGHT EVEN LEAD TO HIS OWN DEATH.

QUOTE: IF ALL POSSIBILITY OF PEACEFUL NEGOTIATIONS WERE CLOSED, HE SAID, VIOLENCE WOULD BE INEVITABLE BETWEEN THE 1.5 MILLION PANAMANIAN AND THE 15,000 AMERICANS OF THE CANAL ZONE.

QUOTE: 'TWO COURSES OF ACTION WOULD BE OPEN TO ME,' HE SAID 'TO SMASH IT OR TO LEAD IT, AND I AM NOT GOING TO SMASH IT.'

QUOTE: 'I AM THE MAN IN THE MIDDLE,' GENERAL TORRIJOS WENT ON, 'CAUGHT BETWEEN THE STUDENTS WHO WANT ACTION AND THE OLIGARCHS WHO WOULD LIKE TO GET RID OF ME. FOR ALMOST SEVEN YEARS I HAVE BEEN CAREFUL TO PROMOTE PEACEFUL RELATIONS ALL AROUND THE CANAL ZONE.'

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QUOTE: 'THAT THE STUDENTS HAVEN'T BROKEN ANYTHING OVER THERE YET IS POSSIBLE ONLY BECAUSE THEY HAVE FAITH IN THE PEOPLE LEADING THE NEGOTIATIONS. I HAVEN'T LOST HOPE, BUT I CANNOT LIVE JUST ON HOPE.'

3. QUOTE: FORD'S POSITION 'EASIER'. ASKED IF PRESIDENT FORD WAS NOT ALSO A MAN IN THE MIDDLE, CAUGHT BETWEEN CONGRESSIONAL FORCES THAT OPPOSE A NEW CANAL TREATY AND THE DEMANDS OF PANAMA FOR EARLY SOVEREIGNTY OVER THE CANAL ZONE, GENERAL TORRIJOS REPLIED: 'IT IS EASIER FOR FORD BECAUSE HIS COUNTRY ISN'T BEING OCCUPIED.'

QUOTE: THE INTERVIEW WAS HELD IN THE HEAVILY GUARDED HOUSE OF A FRIEND OF GENERAL TORRIJOS. THE GENERAL, A WELL-BUILT MAN OF 46 WHO WEARS HIS OLIVE NATIONAL GUARD SHIRT OPEN AT THE THROAT, SPOKE IN SPANISH, INTERPRETED BY FABIAN VELARDE, HIS PRESS ADVISER.

QUOTE: POPULAR AGITATION FOR AN EARLY CONCLUSION TO THE CANAL NEGOTIATIONS IS ONE THE RISE, GENERAL TORRIJOS ASSERTED, AND FOR THIS REASON HE SAID HE HAD FELT COMPELLED TO HOLD PUBLIC MEETINGS WITH STUDENTS AND PROVINCIAL LEADERS TO EXPLAIN WHAT WAS GOING ON. 'IT IS THE ONLY WAY TO PRESERVE CALM,' HE SAID.

QUOTE: THE NEGOTIATIONS, HE CONTINUED, HAVE BOGGED DOWN ON TWO ISSUES--THE DURATION OF A NEW TREATY GOVERNING THE CANAL ZONE AND THE DISPOSITION OF LANDS AND WATERS FOR THE LENGTH OF THE TREATY.

QUOTE: THE ORIGINAL PANAMA CANAL TREATY OF 1903 GRANTED THE UNITED STATES THE RIGHT TO OPERATE AND DEFEND THE WATERWAY IN PERPETUITY AS IF IT WERE SOVEREIGN. BUT

SECRETARY OF STATE KISSINGER DECLARED IN FEBRUARY, 1974, THAT IN NEGOTIATING A NEW TREATY THE UNITED STATES AGREED PANAMA SHOULD EVENTUALLY ACQUIRE FULL SOVEREIGNTY OVER THE ENTIRE 533 SQUARE-MILE CANAL ZONE.

QUOTE: THE FORD ADMINISTRATION HAS YET TO DECLARE WHAT THE DURATION OF THE NEW TREATY SHOULD BE. DEFENSE SECRETARY JAMES R. SCHLESINGER HAS ARGUED IN THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL FOR AT LEAST 45 YEARS AS A REQUIREMENT OF UNITED STATES STRATEGIC INTERESTS.

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QUOTE: MR. KISSINGER HAS SAID THE UNITED STATES COULD GET ALONG WITH A SHORTER TREATY. 3

QUOTE: ASKED WHETHER PANAMA COULD ACCEPT A TREATY THAT WOULD GRANT HER SOVEREIGNTY OVER THE CANAL EARLY IN THE NEXT CENTURY, GENERAL TORRIJOS CLENCHED HIS RIGHT FIST AND SHOOK HIS HEAD. 'NO,' HE SAID VEHEMENTLY, 'IT HAS BECOME A PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAUMA; IT CANNOT GO ONE DAY BEYOND THE YEAR 2000.'

QUOTE: 'I AM NOT VERY IMPATIENT,' HE WENT ON, 'BUT WE HAVE 70 YEARS OF HISTORY OF TRYING TO NEGOTIATE A FAIR DEAL WITH THE UNITED STATES. I THOUGHT THIS TIME WAS DIFFERENT. BUT IT SEEMS IT IS THE SAME ALL OVER AGAIN. WE FEEL YOU HAVE NOT BEEN TRUTHFUL WITH US, THAT THINGS ARE BEING DONE TO TURN US FROM A FRIENDLY NATION INTO AN UNFRIENDLY NATION.'

QUOTE: 'WHEN YOU COME TO THE CRUCIAL MOMENT YOU DON'T FACE UP TO THE PROBLEM. IN THE CRUCIAL MOMENT YOUR NEGOTIATORS START MENTIONING THE PENTAGON AND THE CONGRESS.'

QUOTE: 'THIS IS NOT AN ANTI-YANKEE PEOPLE,' HE SAID. 'WE GET ALONG WELL WITH AMERICANS IN GENERAL. WITH THOSE OUTSIDE THE CANAL ZONE WE GET ALONG FINE, BUT WE ARE OFTEN ENEMIES WITH THE CANAL ZONISTS.'

QUOTE: 'THE CANAL ZONISTS BELIEVE THAT WHAT IS GOOD FOR THEM IS GOOD FOR THE UNITED STATES,' HE REMARKED, ADDING 'PRESIDENT FORD HASN'T TALKED FRANKLY TO THEM.' END
QUOTE. INGERSOLL

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